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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR (DICARLO), EUR/SCE (HOH/FOOKS), NSC FOR  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2018  
TAGS: [BK](#) [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: BOSNIA: RS REQUESTS FBI ASSISTANCE IN CAR BOMBING  
CASE

REF: 07 SARAJEVO 2408

Classified By: Michael J. Murphy. Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

#### SUMMARY

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11. (C) SUMMARY. Republika Srpska (RS) Interior Minister Stanislav Cadjo requested that visiting LEGAT provide FBI assistance in the investigation of the November 2007 car bombing that killed municipal whistleblower, Milan Vukelic. LEGAT also discussed the case with RS Police Director Uros Pena, who echoed Cadjo's request. While Pena was enthusiastic, Cadjo seemed less earnest. Embassy A/LEGAT will visit Banja Luka on February 11 for a preliminary review of the case files. Both Cadjo and Pena stressed that LEGAT would have full RS cooperation and access to all relevant information. The sincerity of this pledge, and the motives for the request, will become clearer after the initial review. The degree of openness and cooperation by the RS MUP and RS Police will in itself be afford insight into the possible motives and perpetrators of the bombing. END SUMMARY.

#### Background

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12. (C) On November 6, 2007 a car bomb exploded in downtown Banja Luka, killing Milan Vukelic, and severely wounded two passengers (Reftel). Since the incident, Republika Srpska (RS) media has reported extensively on allegations that Vukelic had attempted to expose criminal activities involving the Banja Luka Construction Institute, where he was employed as a construction engineer. Vukelic asserted he had reported threats against him to the RS police with no response. Some media outlets have speculated the RS police was involved in the bombing.

13. (C) To date, there have been no public reports of progress on the investigation. Vlado Jovanovic, Chief of the Special Investigation Unit of the RS police, told us in November that a "lack of evidence" would make it difficult to solve the case. Other RS government officials have subsequently made similar assertions.

#### RS Request for FBI Assistance

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14. (C) On December 23, 2007, RS Interior Minister Interior

Stanislav Cadjo raised the possibility of requesting FBI assistance on the investigation with Principal Deputy High Representative (PDHR) Raffi Gregorian. On January 16 Cadjo sent a letter to Gregorian, formally asking him to consider the possibility of requesting FBI involvement in the case. In the letter, Cadjo also raised the need for "forensic analysis of certain pieces of evidence from the crime scene."

15. (C) Embassy Sarajevo LEGAT Janelle Miller held separate meetings with Cadjo and with RS Police Director Uros Pena on February 5, to discuss the request. Miler told Cadjo and Pena that although there is no direct U.S. connection to the case, the FBI could review the case and potentially provide assistance with if local authorities are willing to provide full cooperation.

#### Cadjo Complains of Public Pressure

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16. (C) Cadjo reiterated the request for assistance in his letter stating that his goal is to solve the case, "regardless of where the investigation leads." He added that he was concerned about slow progress in the investigation and "politicization" of the case. Cadjo said the case was generating criticism of police and his ministry, and the press was attempting to send the investigation in unproductive directions. He complained that people "in responsible positions" are promoting various "speculations" about the case.

17. (C) Cadjo specifically complained about Dragomir Babic, president of the Banja Luka-based NGO "Narodni Front," and Slobodan Vaskovic, Editor of the recently defunct opposition weekly magazine Patriot. (NOTE. Babic and Vaskovic are

among the very few outspoken critics of the RS government. Both men participated in OHR's meeting on press freedom in the RS END NOTE). He asserted they people were making "completely irrational arguments" and attacking the ministry for "personal reasons." Cadjo said that while it is normal for media to criticize the government, these attacks could lead the police to "go in completely wrong directions.8 He said that the only way to move past these attacks is to solve the case.

18. (C) When asked for an update on the case, Cadjo claimed that, as Minister, he avoids getting involved in the details of ongoing investigations in order to prevent the perception of political influence and is concerned only with results. Cadjo defended RS police officers, saying the investigation is complex and it is "hard to obtain evidence" in this type of car bombing. He said that while RS authorities have some experience dealing with explosives, they lack technical expertise, equipment and analysis.

19. (C) Cadjo conceded that the victim, Vukelic, visited him in his office last year to discuss, "irregularities" at the Institute and threats against him. He said that Vukelic turned over documentation which Cadjo said he forwarded to the police, who, according to Cadjo, proceeded with an investigation. (NOTE. Several media outlets allege that the police did nothing to protect him or to investigate his allegations. END NOTE.) When taped transcripts of that conversation appeared in the media that Cadjo said he realized that Vukelic had tape recorded their conversation, without his knowledge or consent.

110. (C) Asked whether the FBI could expect full cooperation from the RS police, Cadjo replied affirmatively but added that he is also "realistic." He requested to be informed if any obstructions to cooperation arise and promised to do everything possible to overcome them.

#### Police Director Welcomes Assistance

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111. (C) In a subsequent meeting, Police Director Pena told Miller that "all help is welcome" in the Vukelic

investigation. He said that the only similar case in the RS was the 1999 car bombing attack against Zeljko Kopanja and the RS police consequently lack expertise in this type of investigation. Pena said that forensic assistance and a bomb technician would be useful, as would a review of the investigation to point out any mistakes or missed leads. Pena agreed to quickly provide a detailed synopsis of the investigation for FBI analysis.

Comment

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¶12. (C) Cadjo's motives in requesting U.S. assistance in the case are unclear. Most RS media outlets are supportive of the RS government, and criticism of Cadjo and Dodik has been generally limited to independent commentators with little influence. The preliminary review of the case file will assist us in gauging the sincerity, and possibly the motives, of the RS request. Cadjo's promise of cooperation and transparency seemed less than enthusiastic. In that context we will take care to ensure that the RS does not seek to imply a USG endorsement of its investigation results. Regardless of the outcome, the RS request will provide an opportunity to gain valuable insight into RS police capabilities and potentially shed light on any political elements case. END COMMENT.

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